

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

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**September 13, 2010**

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<b>President Obama Calls for Unity Ahead of September 11 Anniversary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Secretary Clinton Greet Wins of 2010 Democracy Video Challenge.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>U.S. Welcomes South Korean, Japanese Sanctions Against Iran.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Americans Putting More Away in Their Bank Accounts.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>United States Assists with Clean Drinking Water for Pakistan .....</b>	<b>4</b>

## President Obama Calls for Unity Ahead of September 11 Anniversary

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — On the eve of the ninth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, President Obama said the enemies of the United States are the extremists who have perverted the Islamic religion, not the Islamic faith, and he urged Americans to reassert that they will not be divided by religion or ethnicity even as the threat from terrorism continues.

"We are not at war against Islam. We are at war against terrorist organizations that have distorted Islam or falsely used the banner of Islam to engage in their destructive acts," the president said September 10 at a White House press conference.

"The overwhelming majority of Muslims around the world are peace-loving," he said, and share an interest in improving their own well-being and that of their children, while overwhelmingly rejecting the violent ideology championed by al-Qaida, which carried out the 2001 attacks.

"We want to be clear about who the enemy is here. It's a handful, a tiny minority of people who are engaging in horrific acts and have killed Muslims more than anybody else," he told the journalists assembled at the White House.

Obama praised his predecessor, President George W. Bush, who in the aftermath of the terror attacks had made a clear distinction between the vast majority of Muslims and the relative few who advocate violence.

"I was so proud of the country rallying around that idea, that notion: that we are not going to be divided by religion; we're not going to be divided by ethnicity; we are all Americans; we stand together against those who would try to do us harm," Obama said.

"I think it is absolutely important now for the overwhelming majority of the American people to hang onto that thing that is best in us: a belief in religious tolerance [and] clarity about who our enemies are," he said.

The president's call for Americans to uphold the ideals of religious tolerance and unity came in response to questions about whether a Muslim group in the United States should proceed with plans to build a community center and mosque near the site of the former World Trade Center, and a Florida preacher's threats to burn copies of the Muslim holy book, the Quran. His remarks

also came as Muslims around the world celebrate Eid ul-Fitr.

"If you could build a church on a site, [if] you could build a synagogue on a site, if you could build a Hindu temple on a site, then you should be able to build a mosque on the site," the president said in regards to the proposed community center.

"With respect to the individual down in Florida, let me just say ... the idea that we would burn the sacred texts of someone else's religion is contrary to what this country stands for. It's contrary to what ... this nation was founded on," he said.

Along with citing the need to live up to the ideals and freedoms enshrined in America's founding documents, Obama said that millions of Muslim Americans coexist in the United States as neighbors, friends, co-workers and members of the U.S. armed forces.

"They are Americans. And we honor their service. And part of honoring their service is making sure that they understand that we don't differentiate between 'them' and 'us.' It's just 'us,'" he said, adding that the anniversary of the 2001 attacks "is an excellent time for us to reflect on that."

### MIDDLE EAST PEACE "A RISK WORTH TAKING"

Asked about recently resumed direct peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, the president said both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had come to the September 1-2 discussions in Washington "with a sense of purpose and seriousness and cordiality that ... exceeded a lot of people's expectations."

But Obama said he is well aware of the difficulties that stand in the way of a final peace agreement, including those in the region who are actively seeking to undermine the negotiations through violence, as well as cynics who do not believe that the gap in trust between the two sides can be bridged. Nevertheless, Obama said the United States is "actively participating" in the negotiating process and will work to further discussions and stand behind the parties as needed.

"It's a risk worth taking because the alternative is a status quo that is unsustainable. And so if these talks break down, we're going to keep on trying," he said.

He urged Abbas and Netanyahu to help each other with their respective political constituencies to help facilitate difficult decisions that will be made.

The president said he had told Netanyahu that "it makes

sense” to extend Israel’s moratorium on settlement construction while discussions are moving forward, since a final agreement on the borders between Israel and a Palestinian state would allow the construction of “anything that the people of Israel see fit, in undisputed areas.”

Likewise, “one of the things that I’ve said to President Abbas is you’ve got to show the Israeli public that you are serious and constructive in these talks so that the politics for Prime Minister Netanyahu, if he were to extend the settlement moratorium, would be a little bit easier,” he said.

“The two parties need each other” in order to create a Palestinian state and maintain Israel’s existence as both a democratic and a Jewish state, the president said.

“We understood that it was a risk for us to promote these discussions. But it is a risk worth taking, because I firmly believe that ... it is in America’s national security interests, as well as Israel’s national security interests, as well as in the interests of the Palestinian people, to arrive at a peace deal,” he said.

### **Secretary Clinton Greets Winners of 2010 Democracy Video Challenge**

*Says winning filmmakers are fueling discussions about democracy*

By Lauren Monsen  
Staff Writer

Washington — The six winners of the 2010 Democracy Video Challenge were greeted by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at a September 10 awards ceremony at the State Department, where all six filmmakers were formally recognized for the short videos they created about the nature and exercise of democracy.

Hailing the “amazingly successful” competition that drew entries from more than 700 filmmakers in 83 countries, Clinton reflected on the varied responses to the contest’s challenge to complete the phrase “Democracy is ....” The 2010 winners have captured six different visions of democracy — “some satirical and lighthearted, some poignant and haunting,” said Clinton.

Since the contest’s inception in 2008, more than 3.5 million people around the world have been reached by the “Democracy is ...” campaign to engage youth in a global dialogue on democracy. This year’s contest winners, said Clinton, “are using technology to make their voices heard in revolutionary new ways, and by doing so, giving voice to thousands of others.”

Contest participants submitted their videos, which had to be under three minutes long, via YouTube. Eighteen

finalists were selected by an independent jury, and the six winners — each of whom represents a different geographical region — were determined by an online public vote that closed on June 15. The winners are as follows:

- Adhyatmilka from Indonesia (East Asia), for the video Democracy is yet to learn
- Anup Poudel from Nepal (South and Central Asia), for the video Democracy is black
- Farbod Khoshtinat from Iran (Near East and North Africa) for the video ATTN: Mr. Democrat
- Joel Marsden from Spain (Europe), for the video World Vote Now
- Juan Pablo Patiño Arévalo from Colombia (Western Hemisphere) for the video Democracy is ... the right of life (War Child)
- Yared Shumete from Ethiopia (sub-Saharan Africa) for the video Democracy is fair play

Each winner was awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles, New York and Washington and met with members of civic and film organizations in all three cities.

The prompt for the Democracy Video Challenge “is open-ended,” Clinton said. As she noted, the winner from Nepal had observed that “democracy can exist in all countries and it doesn’t have a fixed shape or size.” However, “the fundamental tenets are non-negotiable,” said Clinton. “The videos we are honoring capture essential truths about democracy across the world: democracy is about fair play, and [it] is a learning process.”

“In a speech I gave at the Council on Foreign Relations earlier this week, I said democracy needs defending,” Clinton added. “Well, I think we have a good cross section of defenders here. One of our winners, whose beautiful video was inspired by the Green Movement in Iran, said: ‘If I believe I want democracy, I should fight for it. And this is my way of fighting.’ It gives me great hope to see what young people are saying.”

“Here at the State Department, we often talk about the need to use 21st-century diplomacy to solve 21st-century problems,” said Clinton. “This is the heart of that 21st-century diplomacy — connecting directly to people, particularly young people, around the world.”

Moreover, she said, “we are about to kick off the third annual Democracy Video Challenge at the United Nations next week, so I am very eager to see what ideas this [program] continues to generate.”

The videos of the 18 Democracy Video Challenge finalists have been posted on the Challenge’s official website, its Facebook and Twitter pages and its official YouTube

page.

## **U.S. Welcomes South Korean, Japanese Sanctions Against Iran**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States welcomes announcements from South Korea and Japan to impose new sanctions and other penalties on Iran over its nuclear weapons development efforts.

The United States, Europe and other nations are working to pressure the Iranian regime to resume talks on its nuclear enrichment, which could lead to the development of nuclear bombs and an unchecked Middle East arms race. Six nations — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — have attempted to convince Iran in a series of negotiations to forgo a nuclear development program, but talks halted about two years ago and have not resumed.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said that with these actions, Japan and South Korea join an emerging consensus among nations that have taken steps to show Iran the consequences of its nuclear proliferation actions.

“These actions strengthen the growing international resolve to prevent proliferation and Iran’s development of nuclear weapons and to press Iran to return to serious negotiations on its nuclear program and meet its international obligations,” Clinton and Geithner said in joint statements shortly after the two nations issued sanctions.

On September 8, South Korea targeted 102 entities and 24 individuals with sanctions that include the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is believed to be in control of the nuclear development effort; the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines; and several Iranian financial institutions linked to Iranian nuclear, missile and other programs. These sanctions block foreign exchange transactions with the named entities and individuals except by special authorization, halt banking relations, and prohibit the opening of new branches or offices in South Korea. The targeted individuals are also banned from entering South Korea.

“The Republic of Korea’s robust inspections framework, its prohibition on the export of strategic, controlled items, and its prohibition of new investments or sale of goods, services and technology to Iran’s energy sector will also further limit Iran’s ability to conduct its illicit activities,” Clinton and Geithner said.

Japan on September 3 also targeted Iranian entities and

individuals, including many of Iran’s banks such as Bank Mellat, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.

Taken together, these sanctions and measures by others will deepen Iran’s isolation from the international financial, industrial and energy sectors, Clinton and Geithner said. In addition to the United States, the European Union, Australia, Canada and others have joined the international campaign to enforce sanctions against Iran.

According to published news reports, many banks in the United Arab Emirates have halted money transfers with Iran after the latest round of sanctions were imposed.

President Obama signed legislation on July 1 that expanded unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran’s energy and financial sectors in response to the country’s ongoing nuclear activities. The new measure followed U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, passed on June 9, U.S. Treasury designations on June 16 of additional institutions and individuals that help Iran finance or evade sanctions against its nuclear and missile programs, and unilateral sanctions adopted June 17 by the European Union and Australia.

Estimates indicate that Iran has approximately 2,400 kilograms of reactor-grade low-enriched uranium in stocks at its Natanz enrichment facility, which is enough material for two nuclear weapons, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Estimates are that Iran has begun producing small quantities of uranium to a concentration of about 20 percent, crossing a further nuclear threshold that experts believe could lead to nuclear weapons production.

The primary purpose of the latest Security Council sanctions is to target Iranian military purchases and trade and financial transactions carried out by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, banks and maritime companies.

## **Americans Putting More Away in Their Bank Accounts**

*Trend slows economic rebound, but promises stability in the longer term*

By Katherine Lewis  
Special Correspondent

Washington — U.S. consumers have surprised economists and policymakers by paying off their debts and building savings faster than expected, a development that may slow economic recovery but bodes well for longer-term economic stability.

The U.S. savings rate rose to 6.1 percent in the second



quarter of 2010, reaching a level well above what economists had expected. (The household savings rate is the level of people's savings as a percentage of their disposable income.)

Experts thought American consumers would take a longer time to rebuild personal savings after years of relying on cheap credit and home equity loans to fuel spending. Morgan Stanley, the New York-based financial company, had expected consumers to take until at least 2011 to boost the national savings rate to 6 percent, from 2 percent in 2007. "Consumers have adjusted to the loss of wealth more rapidly than we expected," writes the firm's chief U.S. economist, Richard Berner, in a report on the phenomenon.

Leslie Jacobs, 50, a professional organizer in Connecticut, used to take four or five vacations a year and eat in restaurants several times a week. "The recession has forced me to cook," she said. In addition to avoiding restaurants, she has pared her vacations to one per year, discontinued a maid service, and begun to borrow movies from the library rather than paying to see movies at theaters.

Consumers are "being forced by economic circumstances to be more careful with their funds," said Kathryn Kobe, a senior economist with Economic Consulting Services. "In the short run, it is indicative of the difficult situation that consumers find themselves [in], as well as meaning much slower growth. In the long run, it's a healthy thing for the economy."

In the near term, the higher-than-expected savings rate puts pressure on economic recovery, because when people save more, they aren't buying as many goods and services. U.S. consumer spending has been the engine of economic growth for the United States and the world in the modern era. Subdued U.S. spending will keep U.S. and world economies from bouncing back as quickly as they might otherwise, according to Kobe.

But in the longer term, several economists say, a higher savings rate and less debt are not bad at all because they give households a cushion to weather the next tough economic times. In the third quarter of 2007, U.S. consumers' debt peaked at 125 percent of their annual household income — in other words, people owed banks roughly one-fourth more than they earned in a year — making the recession especially difficult to manage. Now, the debt is at 111 percent of annual income. Morgan Stanley believes that household debt loads should not exceed annual incomes, or, more specifically, that the debt loads should be between 80 percent and 100 percent of income levels over the long term.

In addition to providing stability for future hard times,

increased savings predict some pent-up spending in the coming years. Consumer spending makes up two-thirds of the U.S. gross domestic product, and GDP growth is a gauge of overall economic health. The head of the U.S. central bank, Ben Bernanke, said recently, "Stronger household finances, rising incomes and some easing of credit conditions will provide the basis for more-rapid growth in household spending next year."

Higher savings also have a positive effect on business growth. The cash that individuals put in bank accounts or investment funds is money that those institutions can lend or invest in businesses.

Ken Goldstein, an economist at the Conference Board, said that the U.S. economy is in a transitional period. "You can't be in transition forever. At some point, the money that is being put aside now is going to get matched up with some of the new ideas for innovation and create a stronger economy. That's coming down the road."

The question is whether rediscovered thrift is a temporary reaction to particularly hard times or a more lasting reversal of a trend of falling saving rates that began in the mid-1990s. "We think the sea change in consumer behavior wrought by recession will persist over the next several years," Berner concludes.

For her part, Jacobs vows that, even after the economy turns around, she'll spend less and save more. "The one thing I've learned is that when you're making hundreds of thousands of dollars, you should put it in the savings and checking account instead of spending it."

### **United States Assists with Clean Drinking Water for Pakistan**

Washington — Approximately 32 million liters of safe drinking water and related supplies will reach about 40,000 Pakistani homes because of recent donations that have been made to the U.S.-sponsored Pakistan Relief Fund, the U.S. Agency for International Development says.

USAID and the State Department will deliver a number of water purification kits, including buckets and filtering cloths, to Pakistanis affected by the worst humanitarian disaster in Pakistan's history, the department said in a statement September 9.

"We continue to work hard providing aid to the people of Pakistan, and this additional assistance will help with one of the most pressing needs — that of clean water," USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said. "With more than one-fifth of the nation under water, it is critical we continue to respond in a quick, agile and creative manner to help

confront increasing levels of disease, dehydration and hunger.”

The United States has committed more than \$258 million for flood recovery and relief efforts in Pakistan since the floods began in late July.

Shah visited Pakistan recently and has been working with the United Nations, U.S. humanitarian disaster experts and others engaged in relief efforts to determine the most urgent needs. USAID has been working closely with the Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as well as the Interior Ministry in providing relief supplies, support and assistance.

“It was clear that there continues to be an acute need for clean water, especially as concerns of water-borne and other diseases mount,” the department said in a prepared statement. “In addition to the packets, associated commodities will be purchased from the local Pakistani market and distributed to local [nongovernmental organizations].”

The Pakistan Relief Fund was established by the U.S. government through the State Department to allow the public to give money to help the more than 20 million Pakistanis who have been affected by the floods.

The United States has airlifted additional emergency relief supplies into Pakistan in the last two days. The most recent flights were loaded with more than 85,850 blankets and 46,800 10-liter water containers, USAID said.

In total, USAID has provided 13 mobile water treatment units that each produce enough clean water for 60,000 people a day; 10 water bladders each with the capacity to store 20,000 liters of clean water; 151,750 water containers, each with a capacity of 10 liters; 58 Zodiac inflatable rescue boats; 96 concrete saws and saw blades; 194,380 blankets; and 6,663 rolls of plastic sheeting for the construction of temporary shelters. These relief supplies brought in from USAID warehouses in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates; Italy; and the United States are in addition to the supplies purchased locally by USAID partners that are being provided to those in need.

The United States also has provided other civilian and military in-kind assistance in the form of halal meals, prefabricated steel bridges and other infrastructure support, as well as air support to and within Pakistan to transport goods and rescue people, valued at approximately \$26.3 million (more than 2.23 billion rupees).

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